

later, it is our turn. The bipartisan case for investing in clean water infrastructure has never been stronger.

Every single American deserves access to clean and safe drinking water. So let's get to work. Let's pass the Families of Flint Act, and let's work on a national clean water infrastructure plan to prevent another disaster like this from happening in the future.

#### THE ZIKA VIRUS AND GUN SAFETY

(Ms. PLASKETT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. PLASKETT. Mr. Speaker, I rise to echo the pleas of the American people, especially those in my own home district of the United States Virgin Islands, in calling for this Congress to pass a Zika funding bill and to pass commonsense gun safety legislation.

It has been more than 6 months since the President submitted a plan to this Congress and almost 3 months since House Democrats took to the floor to call for a vote on commonsense gun safety legislation. Instead of passing these bills, Congress has decided to focus its attention on politically charged investigations into investigations. While this Congress was in its longest recess in 60 years, the number of overall confirmed Zika cases and the number of Americans killed and wounded by gun violence continued to grow.

There have been 4,500 lives lost to gun violence in the time that we have been out in recess. This number, sadly, includes the lives of almost a dozen young men and women in the Virgin Islands, including the lives of two police officers and a firefighter. Additionally, there are now more than 11,000 confirmed cases of Zika in the United States, 243 of those confirmed cases being in the U.S. Virgin Islands, and 14 of those are pregnant women.

The lifetime cost of treating a child with microcephaly is estimated to be more than \$10 million for that child—a cost that will only exacerbate the financial woes of this country's and the territories' public health apparatus. The lack of funding for these public health activities will put hundreds of thousands of pregnant women at risk.

Mr. Speaker, I call on this Congress to act quickly and fully fund the President's emergency request to fight the Zika virus as well as to pass lifesaving, commonsense gun safety legislation.

#### THE ZIKA VIRUS: A PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

(Ms. JACKSON LEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, you have heard the cries of our colleagues. You have heard the cries of the American people. Redundancy is not a question here. It is telling the

truth. In fact, our health professionals have indicated that the Zika virus presents an unprecedented threat to the people of our Nation, especially to pregnant women. We cannot hear this often enough, and although busy with the beginning of the school year and with going back to work, it is important to warn the American people of this impending and ongoing threat.

While we are fiddling and doing things that have no impact on providing a portion of the \$1.9 billion that is needed by the American people, we have 1,600 cases of Zika virus in the United States—200 plus women who are pregnant and 35 known transmitted diseases here in the United States of the Zika virus. We also now know, through health professionals, that it is sexually transmitted. We know that the entire United States is vulnerable, but most of the vulnerable States are in the Gulf region.

It is time now to address the question of funding without riders, like preventing Planned Parenthood from getting funding, and without riders for allowing the Confederate flag to be in a veterans' cemetery.

Where is our concern about the American people—for the people in Louisiana with a lot of water? for the people in Texas with a lot of water? in Florida? in Puerto Rico?

It is important that this funding comes now to rapidly expand mosquito control programs and to accelerate a vaccine. That is really important—to be able to provide the American people with a vaccine. They are in the midst of the research. They need the funding. The CDC and the NIH have reprogrammed more money than they have to try to help those who are desperate.

I make the argument that it is time now for us to do the job. The other body needs to engage in providing a bill, and this body, this House, needs to stop playing those kinds of politics and provide the funding—the funding that does not take from Ebola but the funding that the American people need to be safe.

Mr. Speaker, we are currently in a state of a public health crisis as a result of the growing rate of Zika infections across the country.

Sadly, we are failing as our nation's leaders in our ability to respond to this crisis.

As days and month go by it is alarming and the level of action and inaction my colleagues are taking to hamper the ability of our federal government to respond to this rapidly growing public threat.

In particular, I am concerned that we—as a body of Congress—have not taken the critical steps to move forward and appropriate necessary funding that will help screen, treat, vaccinate and test deadly cases of Zika infections.

According to the Coalition for Sensible Safeguards, Congress should be looking for ways to strengthen our nation's regulatory system by identifying gaps and instituting new science-based safeguards for the public.

I cannot agree more—as we are now in perilous times where the Zika virus presents unprecedented threats to the people of our nation.

As cited by Tom Frieden, Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Anthony Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases at the National Institutes of Health in an op-ed, dated August 21, 2016:

There have been more than 16,800 cases of Zika infection reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the U.S. and its territories, including more than 2,700 on the mainland.

Laboratory tests have confirmed that 1,595 pregnant women have been infected with the virus, and tragically, 17 babies have been born with birth defects related to Zika.

As highlighted by Frieden and Fauci—"We have an obligation to meet the Zika threat and protect this country"—as "the potential cost of a funding shortfall will be measured in human misery and even death."

Now is not the time to pass measures or engage in futile debates that will undermine or slow the ability of our federal and local governments to address and respond to this growing threat and active cases of Zika infections.

Rather, we need to invest in stopping this deadly, but preventable virus, before it is too late.

We cannot afford to stand by with our hands tied any longer.

Our limited time as the days in September wain down cannot be wasted.

We should be focused on the crucial mission of protecting our nation's people.

That is why, in these critical times of need, I am calling upon my colleagues to place the growing epidemic of the Zika virus at the top of our priorities and demand no less than fully financed measures to timely and adequately respond to this devastating and deadly public health emergency.

[From Time, Sept. 7, 2016]

HOW TO FIGHT ZIKA AND CURE NATION'S AILING PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM—ENACT A LAW TO RESPOND QUICKLY TO THREATS

(By Sheila Jackson Lee)

There is an excellent model that demonstrates how the U.S. should reform the current reactive model of public health emergency management—it is the solution found to address disasters established by the Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act. Under the Stafford Act, enacted in 1974 and later updated in 1988, authorizes the President of the United States, when disaster strikes, to deploy the coordinated efforts and resources of the federal government to save lives and property, and restore communities hit hard by a calamity. The federal government provides warnings of hurricanes and floods, and in cases of wildfires dispatches resources to extinguish flames before they threaten people and property.

The knowledge of public health experts, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, policy makers, health-care professionals and patient advocacy organizations should be brought together with the relevant committees in the House and Senate to develop measurable criteria to create baselines for defining, responding and mitigating public health threats to effectively and immediately without the delay engendered by the need for Congress to pass an emergency supplemental appropriations.

The U.S. must be capable of responding quickly to emerging threats that are identified anywhere in the world. The Ebola and Zika viruses for examples existed in other